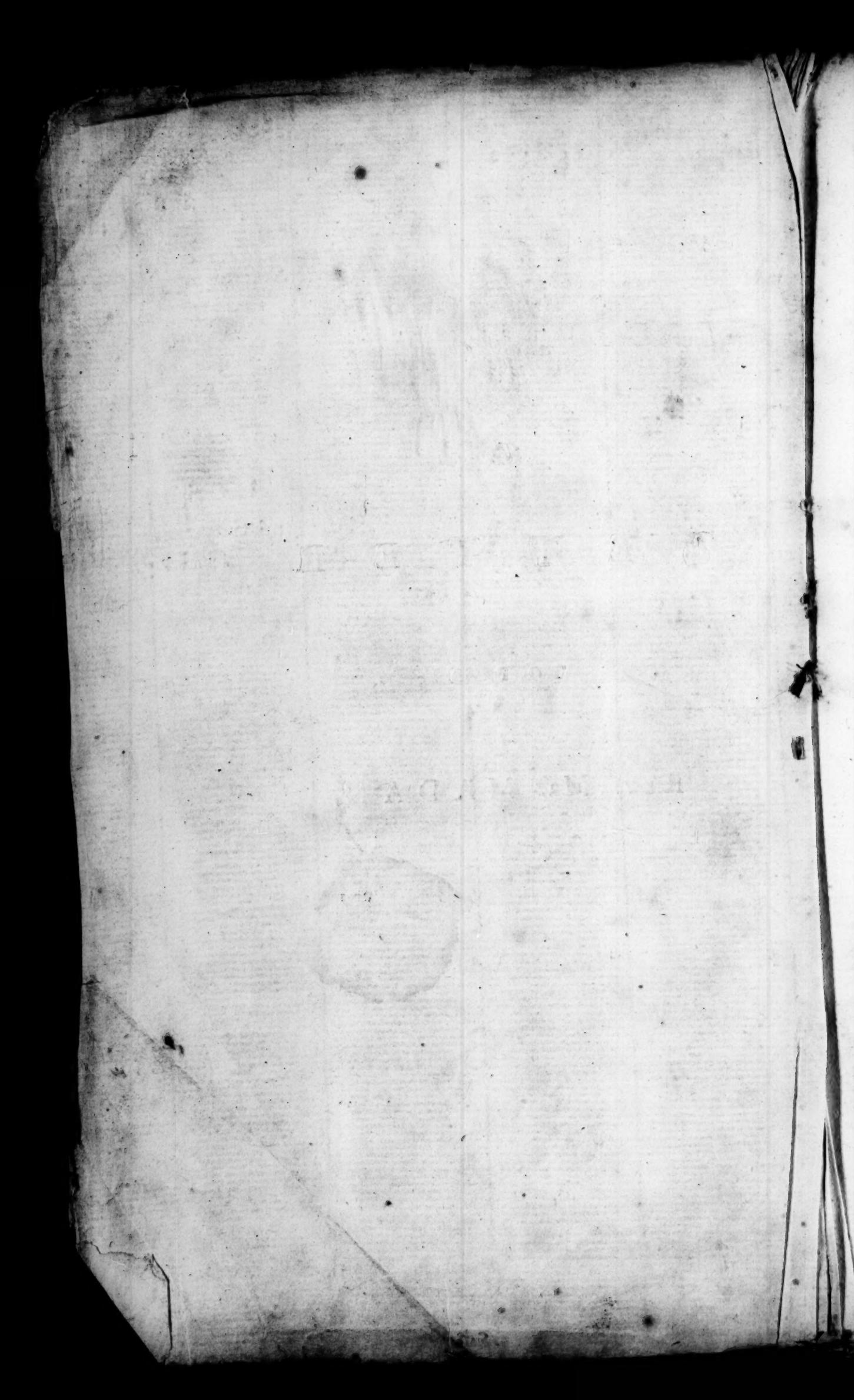


A

L E T T E R
TO THE
REV. MR. MADAN.



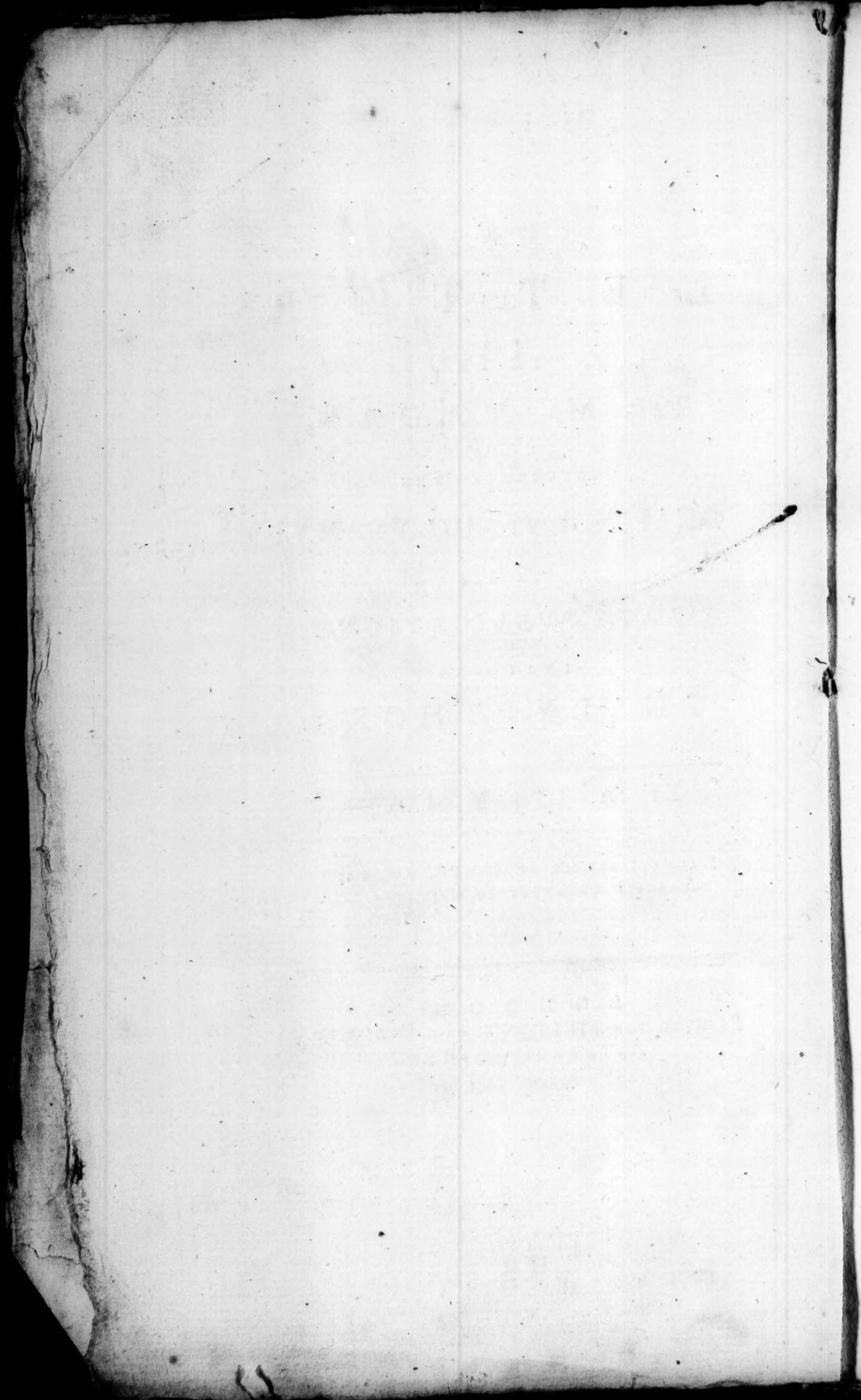
A
L E T T E R
TO THE
REV. MR. MADAN,
CONCERNING THE
CHAPTER OF POLYGAMY,
IN HIS
LATE PUBLICATION,
ENTITLED
THE LYPTHORA.

BY A LAYMAN.

I ALWAYS REJOICE AT TRUTH, WHICH IS THE
GREATEST ORNAMENT OF CRITICISM. —
Earl of Mansfield.

L O N D O N:
PRINTED FOR FIELDING AND WALKER,
PATERNOSTER-ROW.

MDCCLXXX.



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author of the following Leaves, delivers them to the Public, with that Caution which the Importance of the Matter requires.—He has been induced to take up the Pen, from the Abhorrence in which he holds the System endeavoured to be established in that Work, which

is

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

is now the Subject of his Comment; and from a Conviction that it will not stand the Test of God's Word, when taken in the Aggregate.—How far he has succeeded in his Ideas upon the Occasion, must be left to the Judgment of the Reader.

The Writer is aware of the sacred Ground on which he is treading, while as a human Creature, he presumes to offer any

Illustration

ADVERTISEMENT.

Illustration of the Word of God.

If in this Part of his Undertaking
he should be found to have erred,
he is not only *willing* but *desirous*
to be corrected :—only reserving
to himself the Consciousness of
not having intended to put any
Constructions on the Word of
Truth, inconsistent with the Glory
and Perfections of it's Author.

For the feeble Manner in which
he has supported his own Con-
victions ;

ADVERTISEMENT.

victions ; and for the Inaccuracies
of Stile and Composition, the
Writer craves the Indulgence of
those, into whose Hands this Trifle
may fall.

October 5, 1780.

A L E T-

A

L E T T E R, &c.

REV. SIR,

THE work which you have lately delivered to the public, is calculated to call forth the attention of every serious-minded man; as it is fraught with principles, which, if suffered to take place, must produce some very important revolutions in the manners of the world. I have perused the perform-

B ance

ance with that caution and diligence which it required. I entered upon it without having my judgment perverted with those prejudices which too frequently actuate the multitude.

I am now about to offer an observation or two upon what I conceive to be the most material part of your work ;—I mean the Chapter of Polygamy. I am not unconscious of my own incompetency to enter the lists with you, on the matter of critical disquisition. If our present subject required the aid of scholastic erudition, I should tremble at the idea of hazarding an opinion contradictory to your own.

Believe

Believe me, Sir, this is not the language of compliment, for no one holds in more sincere admiration the depth of your argument, the closeness of your reasoning, or the profundity of your talents ; but you are hardly to be reminded that you have endeavoured to establish your system on the *written word of God*, abstractedly from all other authorities ; consequently any person who can read the Bible with that spirit which renders it *profitable for instruction*, is equal to the defence of any truth, or the opposing any error, with the most learned Draw-canfir who ever wielded a pen in the field of argument.

The chief object of your labours seems to be the justification of POLYGAMY; a mode of conduct, it must be confessed, not unfrequently adopted by the world *in practice*, though rarely hitherto vindicated on *principle*. This task was reserved for a Gentleman of your order and character. You have, in truth, produced authorities innumerable from the Scriptures; but you will pardon me when I intimate my suspicions from what I have read, that you have made those authorities correspond with your system, instead of rendering the system subservient to the *word of truth*; or, to speak in plainer terms, it appears to me that

that you have made the Bible rather the prop, than the foundation, of your hypothesis.

Instances have been produced by you, almost without number, wherein many characters under the Mosaic dispensation lived in a state of polygamy, without it's having appeared that they thereby incurred the displeasure of their God. This cannot be attempted to be denied: but it becomes a question of very great importance, and well worthy of mature consideration, whether these facts were not permitted, as the especial means, to answer some very particular purposes in the theocracy over the Jews.

It

It has been, I believe, conjectured, that this, among other circumstances, was intended to secure the promised Messiah from the imputation of descending otherwise, than from the seed of Abraham, and that so soon as this end was accomplished, the plurality of wives was no longer to be warranted.

To account for the manner in which this conjecture might be supposed to operate, is more than I undertake. Nor indeed can it be for man to enter into the *secret counsels of God*. However, all this conjectural reasoning is of no avail, as it leads to no certain conclusions.

Admitting

Admitting the force to be derived from the instances recorded in the Old Testament, it remains to be proved, that this mode of conduct stands justified under the gospel dispensation.

You have with great propriety repeated to us the argument, that as God is the author of the moral, as well as of the religious world, whatever was by him, at the first foundation of the creation, constituted *moral*, must, according to the eternity of his law, continue so to the end. In support of this, you properly introduce the well known assertion of our Lord, who tells us, Matt. v. 17, 18. " Think not I am come to

" destroy

“ destroy the Law, or the Prophets; I
“ am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.

“ For verily I say unto you, 'till
“ Heaven and Earth pass, one jot, or
“ one tittle, shall in no wise pass, ('till
“ all shall be fulfilled *').”

We admit this as an irrefragable position; but in admitting it, we must be cautious in ascertaining what *really* constitutes this law; otherwise, in the language of Lord Shaftesbury †, “ We

* It is rather remarkable, Mr. M. when he quotes this authority of our Lord, leaves out this very material part of it—But more of this presently.

† I desire to be properly understood. I do not introduce his lordship as any authority, I only adopt his phrase.

“ may

" may chance to do God little honour,
" when we intended him the most."

Here the question is, whether the term
" LAW," in this place, comprehends
within its meaning, the whole of the
Mosaic Code, whether ceremonial, poli-
tical, or moral.

If I understand your opinion, you in-
fer from it, that whatever stands re-
corded as the Law, of whatever nature
it may be, under the Mosaic Dispensati-
on, is equally obligatory under that of
Christ. I believe many will differ from
you; because it can hardly admit of a
doubt, that there were some laws cal-
culated for the peculiar direction of the

Jewish nation, in their political capacity, which were not intended as permanent rules of government to the succeeding world; consequently, though these were laws declared by God himself, through the instrumentality of his servant Moses, they did not constitute part of his eternal Law, but were only intended as a portion of their ordinary jurisprudence, accommodated to the nature, and to the temporary exigence of the people.

Few persons, I apprehend, are so unacquainted with their Bible, as to require many proofs to be brought forward to illustrate the propriety of this opinion:—

opinion:—but by way of supporting the argument, we will refer the Reader to one or two cases, which will strike conviction on the subject.

In the first place, the original command, “ Increase and multiply,” must, in the earliest instances, have been fulfilled through the medium of incestuous commerce:—but when ^{the} world had become sufficiently peopled, this no longer was permitted:—and thence it became sin. This is a proof that means were occasionally made use of to forward the divine purposes, which, when compleated, ceased to be lawful:—hence it appears, that the law of which

we are speaking, was subject to that variation, which the urgency of events at that time rendered necessary.

Exodus xxi. 28, 29. furnishes us with another instance, proving the propriety of our sentiments on this head. The Word of God there says,

“ If an ox gore a man or a woman
“ that they die, then the ox shall be
“ surely stoned, and his flesh shall not
“ be eaten, but the owner of the ox,
“ shall be quit.

“ But if the ox were wont to push
“ with his horn in time past, and it
“ hath been testified to his owner, and
“ he hath not kept him in, but that he
“ hath

“ hath killed a man or a woman, the
“ ox shall be stoned, *and his owner also*
“ *shall be put to death.*”

Is it to be believed, that, under the government of the New Testament, this statute continues to operate as an un-repealed command? Surely not. It could only be intended as a part of the civil policy of the Jews, and by no means as a portion of the unchangeable law of God.

Again, we find in Leviticus xxiv. 20. it is declared that there shall be “breach
“ for breach, eye for eye, tooth for
“ tooth; as he hath caused a blemish
“ in a man, so shall it be done to him
“ again ”

"again." This law was abrogated by Christ himself, when upon earth.

These extracts from the only infallible guide, *the Word of Truth*, will, I apprehend, by every candid enquirer, be admitted as authorities sufficiently proving, that *every* law which was given by Moses to the Jews, cannot be considered, in *each* instance, as the unchanging standard of God's will.

It must be allowed, that throughout your Publication, you have proved yourself an indefatigable advocate for the universality and immutability of *every* command which stands recorded on the faithful page of sacred history.

In

In the support of this train of ideas, you have adopted the only method of stamping conviction on the minds of your Readers, *comparing Scripture with Scripture.* In doing this, however, the excess of your zeal has sometimes hurried you into conclusions by no means correspondent with the letter of the text.

It is here that I cannot forbear making what, by some, may be deemed a presumptuous observation, That in several comments, interpretations, and paraphrases, which you have made on the sacred authorities introduced, you have put such constructions on them, as evidently

dently to destroy or pervert their literal meaning. In confirmation of this assertion, I think I can appeal to two or three instances, wherein I am inclined to believe I shall be joined by every impartial and unprejudiced person.

The first instance of this kind to be brought forward, shall be precisely in your own words: “*Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil, but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also, &c.*” This refers to Exodus xxi. 24. where the Law of retaliation was enacted, to be administered

“*nistered*

“ nistered by the Judges of Israel in a
“ judicial way, on the lawful conviction
“ of offenders: but the Jews, who
“ were taught to abuse every thing,
“ made this a rule of proceeding in their
“ own private acts of revenge upon
“ one another. Such a temper and
“ disposition as this was very sinful to
“ indulge, much more to gratify; our
“ Lord therefore checks this, by teach-
“ ing patience and forbearance, and
“ doing good to, rather than injuring
“ their enemies. **BUT STILL HERE IS**
“ **NO NEW LAW.**”

Now, Sir, without bewildering our-
selves in the subtleties of sophistry, let

me ask you what can be plainer than this being a *new* law? Our Saviour tells us, "Ye have heard, that it hath been said, an eye for an eye, &c. But I say unto you, that ye resist not evil," &c. Inasmuch as if he had said, you know that it has hitherto been a part of the law, that retaliation should in every instance take place: but the spirit of my government, is of a more benign, and humble nature; I will not that you do so now; for instead of urging your resentments for the injuries you may receive in the world, it is the express command of me, JEHOVAH, who am greater than Mofes, to you my Disciples,

ciples, that you resist not, and that ye
endue yourselves with that passive cou-
rage, which can alone render you meet
for the kingdom of Heaven.

I will not hesitate to assert, that so
plainly as language can be understood,
it is strongly implied that our Lord's
doctrine was (in this instance) of a spirit
totally repugnant to, and subversive
of that of Moses, and consequently, it
was to every intent and purpose a *new*
law.

Happily for the sentiment which we
here embrace, this is not the only authori-
ty in illustration of its propriety. It stands

connected with other passages, equally as strong, if not more in point. That sacred character, who speaking of himself, tells us, that he is “*The way, the truth, and the life,*” has in Matt. v. 43, 44. this remarkable injunction : “ Ye have heard that it hath been said, “ thou shal love thy neighbour, and “ hate thine enemy : But I say unto “ you, love your enemies, bless them “ that curse you, do good to them that “ hate you, and pray for them which “ despitefully use you, and persecute “ you.” The same divine person, “ *who spake as never man spake,*” utters these expressive words, John xiii. 34.

“ A

" A new commandment I give unto you,
" that ye love one another; as I have
" loved you, that ye also love one ano-
" ther."

If words can convey any precise idea, it evidently appears from these passages in the New Testament, that some of the leading principles of the Mosaic law were abrogated by Christ himself; and that in their stead a *new* system was set up, of an infinitely more refined and spiritual nature.

In order to justify myself in having brought against you so heavy a charge, as that of destroying the sense of your scriptural quotations, I shall proceed to

bring

bring forward another instance. A faithful extract from your Work shall be my best testimony.

“ To contend for Christ’s enacting
“ any *new* law, contrary to the law of
“ nature, and of the Old Testament, is
“ to call in question his veracity, and to
“ place him in a rank of *imposture*, even
“ below *Mahomet* himself. *Mahomet*
“ professed to destroy *the law and the*
“ *prophets*, as they had destroyed all
“ *preceding systems*: whereas Christ most
“ solemnly declared, that *heaven and*
“ *earth could sooner pass, than one jot or*
“ *tittle pass from the law*. *Think not,*
“ *said he, that I came to destroy the*
“ *law*

“ law or the Prophets, I am not come
“ to destroy, but to fulfil.” So far from
“ abrogating the *law*, or *rule of life*,
“ which had been delivered by the hand
“ of *Moses*, or setting up a *new law* in
“ opposition to it; he came into the
“ world to be subject to it in all things,
“ and so to fulfil the *whole righteousness*
“ of it, Matt. iii. 15.”

Before I make any animadversions upon this passage, I am desirous to be informed of the reason, which induced you to omit the very material clause, annexed to that authority of our Lord, which you here introduce, that “Heaven and earth could

“ sooner

“ sooner pafs, than one jot or tittle pafs
“ from the law.” You should at any
rate have given us the whole of the sen-
tence, if you meant to be candid in your
inference, but “ you alter the text, and
“ make a refutable doctrine of your
“ own.” Our Saviour adds *that*, which
makes the most material part of the
argument, *till all shall be fulfilled.*
Thereby qualifying the general assertion,
and doubtless intending to convey the
idea, that a period was approaching,
when this law was to be done away:
the epocha of this great event was to
take place at that moment when *all*
should be fulfilled. What was implied
by

by this fulfilment ; and its consequences shall be taken notice of hereafter.

If I were to tell my servant, that it was not my intention to *pay him his hire*,—*till he should have finished his work*, he would rest satisfied ; take away, however, the latter clause, he would then, indeed, have reason to fear that I *never* meant to do him justice. However familiar this mode of reasoning may appear to a person of your superior faculties, I have no doubt of your entering into its principle. I am really apprehensive, from the manner in which you have maimed the text to which we bear reference, you were conscious, that, if taken in its *entire*, literal con-

E struction,

struction, it would prove too much for your purpose, " and of course (in your " own words on another occasion) prove " nothing."

Such a breach of candour, in one calling himself a Minister of Christ, who pretends to rest his doctrines upon the Word of God, should be sufficient to arm his Readers with a caution how they entered upon his Work ; lest, relying upon what they would justly conceive to be the only genuine test of Truth, they should find themselves misled, and that fatally, by the partial conceits of a prejudiced advocate.

Very distant from me be the idea of affixing to the sacred character of the

IN-

INCARNATE GOD, the imputation of imposture. I hope the presumption of differing from you in opinion, will not amount to the conviction of such atrocious guilt; for I will confess to you, that, so far as my understanding is capable of receiving instruction from the Word of Truth, my mind is impressed with a conviction that the establishment of Moses, as well legislative as ceremonial, was abrogated by the great sacrifice of Christ. I derive great confidence in maintaining this principle, from the authority of St. Paul, who proves, from the argument of philosophical necessity, that it must have been so, from the very nature of things.

His words on this head are altogether conclusive:

“ If therefore, says he, perfection were by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron ?”

“ For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change of the law,” Heb. vii. 11, 12. Again farther on, St. Paul, continues to observe, “ for there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.”

“ For

“ For the law made nothing perfect,
“ but the bringing in of a better hope
“ did ; by the which we draw nigh un-
“ to God.” Ver. 18, 19.

I will not so far doubt the comprehension of the reader, as to suppose that these passages require any comment or illustration ; language cannot deliver itself in more intelligible terms. They prove the truth of our premises, with an irresistible demonstration.

I now undertake to say, I have proved that the law of Moses, was not only subject to variation, but that it was in many instances, actually superseded and abolished, by a priest greater than Moses, even him who was “ for ever after the
“ order

“order of Melchisedec.” I shall not be suspected of arrogance, or of assuming any personal vanity, in having thus expressed myself, as I have not hazarded the opinion upon a mere *ipse dixit* of any one. I have not maintained my principles upon the authority of any human testimony: but I have built my house upon a rock, against which if the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow, it shall not fall, for it is founded upon a rock:—this Rock is CHRIST himself.

From what I have advanced, I hope it will not be unjustly inferred, that I charge the word of God with an incongruity of command. No person is more

more sincerely convinced than I am, that the law was perfect to those to whom it was given under every part of its respective dispensation ; I only contend, that a discriminating line is to be drawn between the partial and temporary system delivered to the Jews, as a peculiar people, and the fixed, eternal, and specific law of God.

It cannot be matter of information to those, who have read the Bible with any attention, when we remark that the history of the Old Testament is little else than a series of events, ordinances, rites, ceremonies, and sacrifices, which were so many prefigurations of those intended to take place under the new covenant :

ovenant: that the prophecies were a farther confirmation to those hopes, which were derived from the promises held out in the Pentateuch; and that the New Testament, is the history of the completion of those engagements entered into by the Saviour of the world.

The death of the cross constituted that great complete sacrifice, without which the wrath of God could not have been appeased, and of which every antecedent ceremony, had only been the forerunner and the harbinger. It was here, that the form was absorbed in essence:—it was here, the type was swallowed up in the antitype:—it was here, Christ became the corner stone of that edifice,

which having raised a foundation on
the ruins of the law, towered above all
the ordinances, and the righteousness of
the world :—it was here that compre-
hensive expression of St. John had its
authority confirmed—“The law was
“ given by Moses; but GRACE and
“ TRUTH came by JESUS CHRIST :”
—it was here the “ *consummatum est,* ”
took place ;—it was here the fulfilment
of the law was compleated ; and conse-
quently, it was here the moral law was
superceded, and the ritual law was
annihilated.

From the time when our Lord descend-
ed upon earth, to the period in which

F those

those “ stripes were inflicted by which
“ we are healed,” it was a part of his
employment, to confirm the divinity
of his mission, by some of those mar-
vellous acts, which could alone have
their origin from God.—In the midst
of these glorious manifestations of his
power, by which the authenticity of his
sacred character was established and
confirmed, he took every opportunity
to exhort his disciples and followers to
adopt those rules of conduct, from time
to time laid down by him, and recorded
for our instruction in the New Testa-
ment; without which, it was morally
impossible they could be enabled to ap-

ply

ply to themselves, and to experience the all-sufficiency of that atonement, he was about to make for the sins of the world. These rules when collected, constitute a system of ethics, as much superior to, and more spiritual than any preceding system (comprehending even the Mosaic) as the heavens are higher than the earth.

Many of the advocates for the eternity of the Mosaic law, will most likely urge an argument from which they will probably expect to draw a powerful inference, viz. that some parts of the Jewish code were taken up, and incorporated with that of our Lord; we ad-

mit the proposition : but what is to be drawn from it ? simply this, that Christ having generally abolished the whole of the Mosaic law, thought proper to adopt some detached spiritual parts of that law, and to make them a part of that establishment, which it was his intention to have observed throughout all ages of the church : and this not *because* they belonged to the law of Moses, but that they corresponded with the nature of his own : by the same parity of reasoning (in order to illustrate great things by small) by which a conqueror having taken possession of a kingdom acquired by the power of his arms, abolishes

ishes the old system of government; and while he is compiling a new code of laws, finds it expedient to incorporate with it some abstracted parts of the former statutes, not because they belonged to the people before they were subdued, but because they were congenial with the spirit of those laws, intended to be put in execution.

In all that I have written on this subject, it has been my endeavour to establish the truth of two or three propositions:—I shall here set them forth:

I. That the *political* law, as delivered to the Jews by Moses their legislator, was *not* eternal.

II. That

II. That the ritual law, was only typical of that sacrifice, which was to be made for the sins of the world by JESUS CHRIST, the INCARNATE GOD.—And

III. That so soon as the serpent's head had been actually bruised by the woman's seed, the ritual law was done away; and the moral law of Moses was superseded by another, of a more pure, spiritual, and refined nature.

I am convinced, that what I have here advanced, can receive its confirmation from an authority no less respectable than the Bible; from these data I shall deduce some inferences, which, if fairly applied,

applied, must lead to the overthrow of your system in favour of polygamy.—It is here, indeed, that the matter between us is brought to the test : you contend, that the plurality of wives having been permitted under the law of Moses, must of course continue to be so under that of Christ. By the principle on which I am reasoning, the practice of polygamy must receive its permission *de novo*, under the covenant of the New Testament, ere it can be warranted.

It is a circumstance very favourable to the opinion which I have endeavoured to establish, that though there were several

veral examples of polygamy among the favourites of God in the Jewish œconomy, which had the sanction of divine authority, there does not appear an instance of the same kind among the glorious company of the apostles, or among any of the blessed characters recorded in the history of Christ;— nor is there any one text in the evangelical or apostolic writings, which if fairly construed, can be said to authorize such an indulgence. Let us, however, appeal to the touchstone itself. I look for no other proof than what you have provided. You have happily supplied

me

me with the text, though we are not agreed in the comment. St. Paul's addressing himself to the Corinthians, gives the following injunction, 1 Cor. vii. 2—5.

“ To avoid fornication, let every man
“ have his own wife, and let every wo-
“ man have her own husband.

“ Let the husband render unto the
“ wife due benevolence, and also the
“ wife unto the husband.

“ The wife hath not power of her
“ own body, but the husband ; and
“ likewise also the husband hath not
“ power of his own body, but the
“ wife.

G Defraud

“ Defraud you not one the other, ex-
 “ cept it be with consent for a time,
 “ that ye may give yourselves to fasting
 “ and prayer; and come together again,
 “ that Satan tempt you not for your in-
 “ continency.”

It was a property of one of the fallen
 Angels, to

——————“ make the worse appear
 “ The better reason, to perplex and dash
 “ Maturest counsels.”—————

I cannot, indeed, conceive that you are
 actuated by so unworthy a principle ;
 but it will not be exceeding the limits
 of candid criticism to say, that, in your
 hands, the spirit of this passage of St.
 Paul evaporates, and is deprived of all

intrinsic

intrinsic meaning. Your industry has been exerted to obviate its literal construction, by means of critical disquisitions, forced allusions, and far-fetched conceits *. In my idea, nothing can be

clearer

* As the limits of this publication will not permit us to be too diffusive in our quotations, we shall confine ourselves to one extract from Mr. M.'s comment upon this passage of St. Paul. This will be sufficient to shew what shifts a prejudiced author is occasionally obliged to make use of, when he is determined at all hazards, to defend his hypothesis.

" As for the conclusion against polygamy,
" which is drawn from the word *wife*, as well as
" the word *husband* being in the *singular* number,
" it will not hold; for the scriptures plainly shew
" us, that *wife* must frequently be understood in
" a distributive sense. A remarkable passage of
" this sort is in 1 Tim. iii. 12. Let the deacons
" be the husbands of ONE WIFE, μιας γυναικὸς ἀνδρεῖς;

G 2

" But

clearer than there being a mutual contract on the part of the man and woman,

“ But can any body suppose, that there was to be
 “ but one wife amongst them all? So in the tenth
 “ commandment, *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour’s WIFE.* This (like *ox*, *ass*, *house*, *servant*) must be taken in a *distributive* sense, and
 “ mean any married *woman*, or *women* whatso-
 “ ever. So Exed. xxi. 33. *If a man dig a pit, and*
 “ *not cover it, and an ox or an ass fall therein, the*
 “ *owner of the pit shall make it good, &c.* Are not
 “ *pits, and oxen, and asses*, to be understood? So
 “ in the text, the word *Wife* means any *woman*,
 “ or *women*, who may be married to the man.”—
 EXCELLENT LOGICIAN!

“ The word *Husband* must be understood in an
 “ *exclusive* sense, because the whole Bible shews
 “ that a woman could have but one husband, here
 “ well expressed by the *ἴδιον ἄρδεα*.” Mr. M. seeing
 that the text, if applied in its literal sense,
 would militate with his doctrine, takes care to let
 his Reader know, that the word *WIFE* must be
 considered in a *distributive*, but the *HUSBAND* in
 an

man, *equally* obligatory on both. So much am I satisfied with the plain, easy, and familiar inference to be deduced from this quotation, that I would hazard the truth of my premises upon the construction that should be put on it by any man, who has been enabled to read his Bible with an understanding heart, without having been perplexed with the subtleties and refinements of human learning. It will probably afford some satis-

an *exclusive* sense. The Gospel was not originally intended to be immersed in such sophisms; it was directed to be preached to the poor, who could not be supposed to enter into the difficulties raised by Schoolmen.—The Scriptures, I am afraid, have suffered more from their friends (so called) than their enemies.

faction

faction to those who have not had the opportunity of perusing your Work, in being informed, that the learned Grotius, and the laborious Dr. Whitby, both inferred from the portion of Sacred Writ now brought forward, that it afforded "a plain argument against Polygamy."

It is very much to be lamented, that prejudice should have so uncontrollable a power over the human mind. We feel it more sensibly, when it is seen that a man, "gifted as you are," cannot escape its influence.

We have another authority of the same respectable character, St. Paul, in our support, who, in his instructions relative

tive to Bishops and Deacons, gives the following opinion concerning their qualifications: "A Bishop must be blameless, *the husband of one wife*," 1 Tim. iii. 2. Again, in his directions to Titus, whom to ordain Elders, he requires him to see "if any be blameless, *the husband of one wife*," Tit. i. 6.

I remember to have read an excellent remark, in an able Writer, that when a man is determined to believe, the very absurdity of his doctrine is sufficient to establish his convictions. This observation was never more clearly exemplified than in your comments upon these authorities of St. Paul. Your paraphrase

phrase of them is so curious, that I shall not do my Reader justice, if I omit laying the principal part of it before him.— After speaking of the office of the Bishops and Deacons, you proceed thus :

“ As such an office must moreover require great attention, those should be chosen, who are entangled as little as possible in the *affairs of this life*,
“ 2 Tim. ii. 4. Therefore, though for this reason *single* men might in general answer the purpose best, 1 Cor. vii. 33: yet it may be expedient in some instances, to chuse *married* men into the offices of *Bishops* and *Deacons*.
“ Where

“ Where this is the case, the election
“ should not be made of such of the
“ Christians as have more than *one wife*,
“ as such a situation must necessarily
“ involve the person in more worldly
“ care, than can be consistent with a
“ due attention to that care, which must
“ come upon them daily, respecting the
“ Church. Therefore the having more
“ than *one wife*, should always be consi-
“ dered as a bar to a man’s election
“ either to the office of a *bishop*, or a
“ *deacon*, 1 Tim. iii. 12. for though
“ these last may not have so extensive a
“ jurisdiction, yet what with preach-
“ ing the word—assisting the *bishops*

H “ and

" and *elders*—visiting the sick—and dit-
" tributing the *church's* alms to the
" poor—*one wife* and family is as much
" as can be at all considered consistent
" with any tolerable diligence in the
" duties of a *deacon's* office."

If this is to be called reasoning, I con-
fess it is of that species, which I did
not expect would originate in a person
of your understanding. Whatever pre-
cepts were delivered by Christ or his
apostles, were *equally* obligatory upon
the *whole* race of mankind. If the plu-
rality of wives was permitted to men in
general, the restraining of the ministry
from that indulgence, will not be very
distant

distant from implying a justification of that principle in the Romish church, which enjoins clerical celibacy. Since that important æra, when the true religion was rescued from the tyranny and superstition of Papal Rome, it has rarely been thought that the clergy have been subject to greater restraints, under the gospel of Christ, than any other order of men. To contend that the ministers of the new dispensation are, *from the nature of their function*, precluded from those indulgences which are permitted to the world at large, is *vox & præterea nihil*: it is expedient, indeed, for the honour of God, and to preserve the holiness of his purposes, that his ambas-

sadors should keep themselves *unspotted from the world*; that is to say, from its impurities: but from hence it does not follow, that they are exempted from the ordinary comforts of life—such monastic principles are in truth only calculated for that spot where ignorance and bigotry have erected their standard.

Every man, as well as the clergy, has his relative duties, and his engagements in life to discharge; to the execution of which, polygamy, and its consequences, would operate as an impediment, in as great a degree as to that line of character.

But to consider the busines of this nether world in a more elevated point of view;

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we shall find that *every* true disciple of Christ, has a *race set before him*, the pursuit of which requires him to be as much disentangled from the affairs of this life, as any avocation upon earth, let its engagements be ever so sacred or important. Every person who is *really* and not *nominally* a christian, feels he has *a salvation to be wrought out with fear and trembling**. Such is the consequence of this *one thing needful*, that scripture itself labours, as it were, at its description. It has indeed painted it in a dignity and uniformity of metaphor, that is rarely equalled in any writer, antient or modern, sacred or prophane:

* Phil. ii. 12.

it sets out with informing the genuine christian, that in *pressing toward the mark for the prize of his high calling* *, he has a *fight to be fought* †; that he is engaged in a warfare, wherein he *wrestles not merely against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places* ‡. That *the world, the flesh, and the devil, are in league against him.* That God knowing he is of himself unable to help himself, has *chosen him a soldier* ||, under the banner of JESUS CHRIST, who has condescended to be the *captain and leader of his salvation.* That ere he

* Phil. iii. 4. † 2 Tim. iv. 7. ‡ Eph. vi. 12.
|| 2 Tim. ii. 4.

can be caused to triumph, he must be sensible of his own insufficiency; and that instead of relying on his own exertions, he must be *strong in the Lord and in the power of His might* *: and that he may not fall a victim to the powerful confederacy that is opposed to him, he is not only enjoined, but is invited by the endearing calls of affection, to accept the loan, as it were, of *the whole armour of God* †, without which he must necessarily be overcome, but with which he shall be *more than conqueror through him that loved him* ‡.

If this is not an overcharged representation of the state of every man,

* Eph. vi. 10. † Eph. vi. 11. ‡ Rom. viii. 37.

born under the covenant of grace, it will follow of necessity, that your supposition of St. Paul's intending to have a distinction observed between the clergy and laity, touching the ordinary purposes of life, must fall to the ground: as it is undeniably true, that every one of God's creatures has a work to go through, which if he enters upon with more than professional ardour, will suffer him to be as little entangled in the affairs of this life, as the ministrations of the duties of the church will the bishops and deacons.

To have been consistent with yourself, and to have given weight to your argument, it behoved you to have brought forward

forward the whole of the context, and to have undertaken the proof (a laborious task it must be confessed) that every bishop or deacon, under the direction of St. Paul, must not only have been *the husband of one wife*, while (according to your judgment) the rest of the world were licensed in the indulgence of more; but that he must be more *blameless*, less addicted to riot or unruliness, than his fellow-christians: more self-governed,—less prone to anger,—less given to wine,—not so much a *striker*,—less swayed by filthy lucre,—a greater lover of hospitality and of good men,—more sober, just, holy, temperate, and more tenacious of the faithful word as he had been taught:—This, I say Sir,

I should

should have been proved *altogether*, before you could reasonably and fairly have established a principle on a *detached* part of it.

Taking the whole of this exhortation of the apostle, into one comprehensive point of view, nothing in my idea can be more satisfactory, than the plain intelligent lesson that it was intended to afford. The ministers of Christ being charged with the commission of publishing the glad tidings of the gospel, and of enforcing the necessity of obedience to the commands of its author, it became expedient that they should prove themselves worthy

worthy of such an embassy, by the purity of their manners, and the excellency of their lives; thereby (as the apostle expresses it, and through the medium of sound doctrine,) convincing the gainsayers. These, indeed, ought to be the principal traits in the characters of those who are called to the ministry: but it is not to be understood, that they are expected to be more exemplary in their conduct, than the rest of the christians. These are called upon to prove the sincerity of their professions, by the most steady observance of every principle laid down in the gospel.—In short, it equally behoves every member of

Christ's body, to be correspondent with their vocation, whether in, or out of the church—such was evidently the meaning of the apostle Paul,

So far as the doctrine of polygamy must stand or fall upon the authority of holy writ, I will here be contented to rest the subject. In the first instance, proofs have been adduced, that the Moⁿaic law was superseded by the death of Christ: and of course, that with that abolition, the plurality of wives ceased to be lawful, unless it should have received a fresh permission under the new covenant. That no such permission was either *implied* by the practice of it,

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by any of the sacred persons in the history of Christ and his apostles,—or expressly licensed by any direct authority on their part is equally clear; the very contrary appears to have been the case.

I derived great satisfaction in perceiving upon the face of your work, that my ideas on this head were in unison with those of such characters as HUGO GROTIUS, DEAN DELANY, DOCTOR WHITBY, DICTIONARY CHAMBERS, and JUDGE BLACKSTONE, men who with the same zeal for truth with yourself, —the same purity of sentiment,—the same capacity of discernment, and the same authorities before them, were clearly,

ly, decisively, and “*gravely*” * of opinion, that “*Polygamy* is condemned “by the law of the New Testament.”

It is by no means a part of my purpose to enter upon the business on any other ground, than that on which

* Mr. M. in a note, thus expresses himself; Judge Blackstone very *gravely* says, Comm. vol. I. p. 436. “*Polygamy* is condemned by the law of “the New Testament.” A minister of Christ affecting to laugh at a man, who by posterity will be esteemed the ornament of the age and nation which he lived in, for maintaining an opinion, whose propriety since the christian æra, has ever been confirmed by all civilized persons, is such a violation of common decency, as cannot fail to raise the anger of every one, whose judgment has not been preverted by prejudice. The indignation attending such a conduct can only be heightened by reflecting on the function of the character by whom it is exhibited,

I have

I have already ventured. Scripture is
the only criterion by which questions of
this kind can be ascertained: through
the influence of that authority, my own
convictions are satisfied.

To those however who reason upon
the principles of nature, and of general
propriety, there presents itself a very ex-
tensive field for curious speculation;
men of leisure, who are deeply read, have
an ample opportunity of exerting their
talents: and thereby, under God, may
be the means of refuting a doctrine so
dangerous to society, in whose support
no small portion of human ingenuity
has been made use of.

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By such, for instance, it might be enquired, (I am aware with what humility) that if the plurality of wives was permitted from the beginning, how came it, that the Deity confined the first man Adam to one only? particularly at a period when, in the course of things, it may naturally be supposed, the world required greater channels of propagation. It might be matter worthy of investigation to have it ascertained, that in the union of man and woman, Christ having directed *the twain to become one flesh*, and declared that *those whom God had joined together, no man should put asunder*, by what association of ideas a

man

man can be justified in forming a subsequent connection with another woman.—It might be contended, that as there is but one portion of affection in the human breast, a division of it among a variety of objects is tantamount to the parties being put asunder: it might be urged with some weight of argument, that the more highly fraught this affection is, it is the less capable of being diverted from the first subject. And the advocate for a plurality of wives might fairly be called upon, to prove, that from the proportion of numbers between the males and females, a natural inference

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was to be deduced, favourable to his opinion *.

But after all, Sir, laying aside the busineſs, as matter of theological controversy, let me be permitted to enquire of you, what could induce you to exercise your great abilities on ſuch a ſubject?—Admitting that you ſtamp conviction on the minds of your religious readers, to what end does it lead?—

Granting

* A gentleman in holy orders has affiſed me, and from his general knowledge I can rely on his information, that if the Bills of Mortality are accurately compared for the laſt fifty years, it will be found, that, one year with another, the ratio runs about fourteen males to thirteen females; a fact, which, if admitted, proves, that, in the *nature of things*, Polygamy cannot be warranted.

Granting every thing that you have advanced, what has been proved but this — that the plurality of wives is not a duty enjoined, but an indulgence permitted: before you entered upon the subject, you must have been conscious that the genius, the manners, the temper, and the laws of your country, were in direct opposition to your system. You could not flatter yourself that any arguments you could make use of, were sufficient to lay aside a principle in society, founded in reason, and confirmed by beneficial experience. The weak and the wicked will be happy to justify themselves by any plausible authority,

when they violate one of the chief bonds of social comfort: hence the effects of your labours militates with those of St. Paul, who enjoins *every soul to be subject to the higher powers.*

I should here take my leave of you, and of the subject, if I had not on my hands a debt of gratitude, which I am desirous to discharge. It is to those single gentlemen, who shall have done me the honour to peruse this trifling performance. I cannot be more sincere in my return for such an obligation, than by apprising them of, and consequently warning them against, those dangers and inconveniencies to which they

they subject themselves, when they enter into that state, which the chief of our Poets has beautifully painted as the

“ — Sole property
“ In Paradise of all things common else.”

The transcribing a long note, will furnish me with an opportunity, which cannot fail to derive additional weight, from its having made its appearance under the venerable sanction of your respectable authority.

“ It is to be feared that there are not a few females, who (like other monopolists) take the advantage of the poor husband’s situation, to use him as they please; and this for pretty much the same reason, why the ass in the fable insulted and kicked the poor old lion—because it is not in their power to resent it as they ought.

“ The advice which king *Ahasuerus* received from his wife men, the seven princes of *Media*
“ and

" and *Perzia*, upon queen *Vashti*'s disobedience,
 " would have an excellent effect could it be fol-
 " lowed. Many an high spirited *female* would
 " have too cogent a reason against the indulgence
 " of a refractory disposition not to suppress it.
 " Her *pride*, which is now the husband's torment,
 " would then become his *security*, at least in a great
 " measure; for *pride* is a vice, which, as it tends
 " to *self-exaltation*, maintains uniformly its own
 " principle—not to bear the thoughts of a *rival*.
 " See Esther i. 10, &c. As things are with us, the
 " poor man must grind in *mola afinaria* during life.

" It is certain, that nothing can be a release from
 " the bond of marriage itself but *death*, or an act
 " of *adultery* in the wife; but that a man is at all
 " events bound to maintain the *external bond*, by
 " cohabitihg with a woman, who, instead of being
 " an *help-meet* for him (as we say) becomes, by the
 " violence and perverseness of her temper and dis-
 " position, a constant and increasing torment; and
 " this after the most friendly, tender, and kind ad-
 " monitions, is not consonant either to Scripture
 " or reason.

" Some will tell us, that such a thing must be
 " looked upon as happening by the will of PROVI-
 " DENCE, as a chastisement or visitation from
 " heaven, and therefore must be submitted to, and
 " endured.

" So

" So is sickness from the hand of God; so are
" afflictions of all kinds, and certainly to be sub-
" mitted to with patience and resignation; yet to
" use means of recovery from sickness, and of deli-
" very from trouble and affliction, are apparent du-
" ties, and why not in the other case?"

How far this train of sentiment can
be reconciled with a liberal mind, I
leave those who possess it to determine.

For my own part I am free to confess,
that the ideas appear to me so uncandid,
that I am surprized they could find for
their author, a man of your education,
character, and connections. It has ever
been supposed that the husband is the
head; scripture and reason both con-
cur in allowing him the superiority.
Your experience in the world cannot

have

have left you uninformed, that tyranny is not unfrequently the concomitant of power. I am sorry to say it of my own sex, but I am fearful that women have more urgent reason to complain of the men, than men have of the women. At least, I believe, the ballance is pretty even between them.

I now draw to a conclusion : I have thrown together my ideas on the subject of polygamy : they are in truth, very crude, and indigested. The vain presumption of removing your prejudices, or of giving instruction to the learned, was by no means the inducement of my taking up the pen. The object of my

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endeavours has been simply to throw some information in the way of the plain and unlettered ; and to oppose, as far as lies in the power of an obscure citizen, the dangerous consequences that may arise from your publication. Though, indeed, I despair of there being public virtue sufficient either in our seminaries of piety, learning, and devotion, or on the bench of —— to take a proper notice of the work, entitled Thelyptthora ; I will hope, that there are some individuals, whose inclination and ability will so far co-operate, as to step forward to expose the fallacy of your reasoning, and to render inert the effects which might otherwise be derived from

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it ; so that, according to the elegant metaphor of a deceased nobleman, the poison * and the antidote may go together.

The injuries which your labours will probably do to the world, ought by you to have been foreseen. You owe much to the public. You have a great atonement to make. Martin Luther, the great Protestant Reformer, set you an illustrious example—it had been well if you had followed it. His dying prayer was, that

every

* The mention of the word poison, reminds me of an anecdote not unworthy of being known.—A very faithful servant of God, a diligent labourer in the vineyard of Christ, being asked if he had read Mr. M.'s publication, replied in the negative : being urged to give his reason, he made this shrewd, intelligent, and significant reply, “ Because I am unwilling to try how much arsenic my constitution will bear.”

every syllable he had written might be destroyed, lest (such was the purity of his zeal) it should be found his sentiments had militated with, and thereby done dishonour to the Word of God. If such was his fear, even in so GLORIOUS A CAUSE as that wherein he was engaged, how much more would it have become you to have been actuated by such sentiments in an undertaking, which, if adopted by the world, must lead to the introduction of licentiousness, and must terminate in the overthrow of every principle of social comfort. The very infidel (a solecism in the history of religion) will avail himself of the detached parts of the Bible, with which you have supplied

supplied him, to justify himself in measures, which in his conscience he knows to be contrary to the "moral fitness of things."

I here take my leave of you, with applying to myself part of your own words. — "Here, Reader, I have lifted up the *hive*, and out has flown the *swarm*; not a *swarm* of useful, industrious *bees*, but a *swarm* like that in *Egypt*, which was grievous, and corrupted the land."

I am, with due respect,

Reverend Sir,

Your very humble Servant,

A LAYMAN.